

GENERATIONS BETRAYED

Cutting the Roots of our National Identity



Chris McGovern



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FOREWORD

CIB's new booklet *Generations Betrayed*—cutting the roots of our national identity is a well-researched and timely publication which should appeal to all those who care about Britain's future as a self-governing democracy of global importance. It sets out clearly how our children are being let down by an educational elite who see Britain and its history as anachronisms in the modern world.

The booklet draws attention to the ignorance among the younger generation about vital parts of British history which is very worrying indeed. Their grasp of our history compares badly with that of older people who were far more knowledgeable about the great events and epochs which moulded, nurtured and defended our great country through the centuries enabling it to build a thriving democracy at home and at the same time to become a world power. It also shows how the educational establishment believes that the teaching of history is too Anglo-centric and this, no doubt arises from their desire to promote the idea that nation states are out of date and that Britain's future is within the embrace of the European Union and governance by an unelected oligarchy.

Finally, the booklet provides a clear warning that our children are being brainwashed and, unfortunately, our politicians are either ignorant of what is happening or, even worse, are party to it."

Lord Stoddart of Swindon

Labour MP for Swindon from 1970 to 1983 with a lifelong commitment to sovereign, democratic, parliamentary government.
Lord Stoddart now sits as Independent Labour.

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Front cover

Illustration from an edition of Robert Browning's *Pied Piper of Hamelin*; with acknowledgements (and apologies) to Arthur Rackham (1867-1939).

INTRODUCTION

A spectre is haunting classrooms across Europe—the spectre of ignorance about our continent's history. A new group, Historians for Britain, representing leading academics, has warned of school textbooks across Europe promoting the false notion that the unification of Europe has been a long-term historical enterprise. This, they point out, is a misuse of history for Europhile political objectives that flies in the face of historical facts.

Fears that British school children are also being subjected to influences that promote further European integration are well founded. Such influences are firmly embedded in the history curricula being taught in schools across the United Kingdom. Alarmingly, they are much more subversive than the approach to school history that has been identified in classrooms across Europe. They go largely undetected because they happen mostly 'under the radar'.

SUMMARY

The main obstacle to pupils being provided with a fair and balanced account of the European Union is not, in the main, the proliferation of pro-EU material available to schools. The main obstacle is a lack of knowledge caused by school history curricula in each part of the UK that promote so-called 'skills' at the expense of knowledge. In effect, ignorance of the landmark personalities and events that define our national identity is being positively promoted.

In England, the new National Curriculum is supposed to address this problem but in many ways, by promoting a 'free for all' regarding choice of subject content, compounds it. There is no requirement, for example, that children be taught anything that might allow them to have the knowledge base to challenge pro-EU bias inside or outside of the classroom; not even Magna Carta, Nelson, Churchill or the two world wars. However, a single method of teaching, based on the inculcation of so-called historical 'skills', is prescribed. The effect of this method is to dilute content and knowledge. The history curricula in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland are even more overtly committed to skills at the expense of knowledge.

NATIONAL CURRICULA IN THE UK—BACKGROUND

The Education Reform Act of 1988 introduced a National Curriculum for England and Wales. A similar National Curriculum for Northern Ireland was introduced in 1992. Subsequent revisions have led to a significant divergence between the document for England compared with those for Wales and for Northern Ireland. The revised English National Curriculum (published 2013 for teaching from 2014) claims a greater focus on knowledge. In contrast, the curricula for Wales and Northern Ireland overtly downgrade knowledge in favour of skills.

The Welsh Government website sets out the philosophy of the current Welsh National Curriculum: "The school curriculum is learner focussed, places an emphasis on skills development and ensures that it is appropriate for the specific needs of Wales." In terms of history this translates into a requirement to teach answers to such questions as: "what impact did people of this time have on their environment?" Professor Graham Donaldson has recently completed his review of this Curriculum. Whilst he recognises the importance of 'knowledge', the heart of his recommendations is about cross-curricula skills and concepts. "The Curriculum 3-16 should be organized into Areas of Learning and Experience", he concludes. History is part of a "Humanities Area of Learning and Experience" that "draws on history, geography, RE, business and social studies".

The Northern Ireland Curriculum requires a similar approach. It states: "At the heart of the curriculum lies an explicit emphasis on the development of skills and capabilities for lifelong learning and for operating effectively in society."

Scotland does not have a National Curriculum but, currently, provides general teaching guidelines via its Curriculum for Excellence. It fully embraces the skills-based, cross-curricula approach of Wales and Northern Ireland.

Unlike in other subjects the History National Curriculum for England parallels the skills-based approach of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Whereas, for example, the new 2013 Geography National

Curriculum for England requires specific content to be taught, the content to be taught for history is determined by individual schools and teachers.

The remainder of this paper focuses on the History National Curriculum for England. However, the matters of concern about England are true in a more concentrated form for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

ENGLAND'S NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR HISTORY PRIOR TO THE CURRENT REVISED 2013 VERSION

Since its introduction in 1988 there have been several revisions of the National Curriculum but, with regard to history, the emphasis has consistently been on children acquiring so-called 'skills' rather than knowledge. These skills are based on the notion that all history is 'provisional' and are supposed to equip pupils with the ability to 'construct' history for themselves, and to 'deconstruct' existing narratives. They focus heavily on the evaluation of 'evidence'. If necessary, the teachers are free to go as far as faking evidence in order to teach the 'skills'. One of the most widely used secondary school history textbooks, *Minds and Machines 1750-1900* (Longman), reprinted several times and part of a series, makes this explicit:

"...we have tried to imagine what they would tell us if they were to come back from the dead."

In fact, the only thing that is unique about history as a subject is that it is an account of the past. Everything else related to the subject is cross-curricula and it is the cross-curricula elements—the 'skills'—that are, largely, taught in schools. This goes some way towards explaining the level of ignorance about our past that is so prevalent amongst many of the younger generation.

The failure of the History National Curriculum to provide pupils with the knowledge base that underpins national identity has been illustrated by a number of surveys, examples of which are set out below.

HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE

1. A survey from 2003 (reported in *The Sunday Telegraph* 16th June) revealed that 30% of 11-18 year-olds thought that Oliver Cromwell fought at the Battle of Hastings and a similar number could not name the century in which the First World War was fought. Fewer than half of the 200 children questioned knew that Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar was the *Victory*.

2. In August 2004, prior to its "Battlefield Britain Series", the BBC issued a press release headed: "Alexander the Great won the Battle of Hastings... Gandalf defeated the Spanish Armada... the Battle of Britain was a turning point in the 100 Years War... the Romans never invaded Britain..." It went on to explain that a survey it had commissioned on landmark events in British history revealed "the older generation are far more clued up on their history than the supposedly sharper 16 to 44 age groups".

Amongst 16-34 year-olds a third could not spot the victor in the Battle of Hastings from these five options: (a) Napoleon (b) Wellington (c) Alexander the Great (d) William the Conqueror (e) Don't know

Half of this younger generation did not know that the Battle of Britain happened during World War 2 and almost half could not connect Sir Francis Drake to the battle against the Spanish Armada, naming, instead, Gandalf, Horatio Hornblower or Christopher Columbus. 71% of over-65s knew that the famous battle marked every year on 12th July by the Orangemen in Northern Ireland is the Battle of the Boyne. In contrast, this was known by only 18% of 16-24 year-olds. 15% of these youngsters thought the Orangemen were celebrating the victory at Helms Deep, the fictional battle in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.

3. In October 2004, Channel 4 published a poll it had commissioned to accompany its TV series on the history of the monarchy. It found that only 10% of 15-24 year-olds could connect King John to Magna Carta. Over half did not know that 'Windsor' is the official name of the royal family. Just 16% knew that James was the name of the first monarch to sit on the

thrones of England and Scotland at the same time. A mere 26% of these youngsters knew the identity of the king who was executed after the Civil War. 34% knew that Queen Victoria was our longest serving monarch. The survey of nearly 2000 people showed that 15-24 year-olds were far less likely than older people to know the correct answer.

4. A survey published in 2009 showed that a lack of knowledge extends to able undergraduates. Derek Matthews, Professor of Economic History at Cardiff University was so concerned about the downgrading of knowledge in school history lessons that over three years (2006, 2007, 2008) he tested the basic historical knowledge of his British educated new first year social-science undergraduates at this Russell Group university. These students were probably in the top 15 per cent of their age group for educational attainment. He posed five basic questions relating to landmark events and personalities of British history. They were: "...the easiest history questions I could think of, and what I considered any well-educated (make that any) 18 year old should know."

The results below show the percentage of correct answers:

1. Who was the general in charge of the British army at the battle of Waterloo? 16.5%
2. Who was the reigning monarch when the Spanish Armada attacked Britain? 34.5%
3. What was Isambard Kingdom Brunel's profession? 40.5%
4. Name one prime minister of Britain in the 19th century. 11.5%
5. In what country was the Boer War of 1899 to 1902 fought? 30.6%

In his report Professor Matthews recounted how students in a typical tutorial had never heard of the Reformation and did not know what was meant by the term 'Protestant'. "This implies that, all things being equal, 85 per cent of my undergraduates' age group knows even less than they do. In other words, we are looking at a whole generation that knows almost nothing about the history of their (or anyone else's) country.' He added: 'This is an outrage and should be intolerable.'"

5. On 7th October 2011, The *Daily Mail* carried this headline: Oh no, no, no, no! Teenage pupils 'believe Winston Churchill is TV advert dog'. Its story, widely reported, was based on the experience of Katharine Birbalsingh, an experienced London deputy head teacher who had addressed the 2010 Conservative Party Conference.

6. If anything, the decline of historical knowledge amongst young people has recently worsened. In Spring 2014 Ofsted's Lead Inspector for History reported of school history lessons that, "Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics studied is not as good as it was at the time of Ofsted's last subject report [2011], *History for all*." (The National Curriculum for History from September 2014: the view from Ofsted—published by the Historical Association).

At best, such ignorance makes young people indifferent to the question of British sovereignty in Europe. At worst, it makes them highly vulnerable to seductive and one-sided viewpoints.

THE NEW 2015 NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR HISTORY

As Education Secretary, Michael Gove was determined to place knowledge at the heart of his new History National Curriculum for England. Confidential initial drafts set out a knowledge-based approach but were unsound in terms of the accuracy of some of the knowledge they presented and insufficient in terms of the topics covered. A final draft ironed out these problems but provoked overwhelming criticism from teachers and some historians for being too knowledge-prescriptive and too Anglo-centric. At this point the Secretary of State appeared to 'give in' and asked a small sub-group, from those he was consulting, to produce a new draft curriculum. Probably unknown to Mr. Gove, this sub-group included people who had done much to promote the so-called 'knowledge-lite' New History which has been dominating school history lessons since the 1980s.

The new National Curriculum for History now being taught in schools is the one produced by that cabal of 'experts' who were determined to maintain 'skills-based' history teaching. Mr. Gove told the full group of

those he was consulting, that the evolution of the new history curriculum had gone through a process of "thesis" and "antithesis" to "synthesis". This was disingenuous. The truth is self evident from reading the published document and paying attention to the detail. It cements in place a *status quo* that will ensure pupils remain deprived of the competence to form a knowledge-based opinion of the British sovereignty and the European Union.

Over twice as many words in the curriculum are devoted to prescribing how to teach the subject, using the contentious skills-based approach (so-called "new history"), than is devoted to the content of what must be taught. Nearly all events and personalities are optional including, even, such landmarks as the Battle of Hastings, Magna Carta, both World Wars and Churchill. In terms of historical knowledge the key words, many times repeated, are: "Examples (non-statutory). This could include..."

In other words teachers are informed in very specific terms that the teaching of nearly all the landmark events and personalities is not a requirement. The only requirement is to cover broad periods of history such as:

- ◆ "ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901"
- ◆ "challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day"

The "French Revolutionary wars" (1792-1802) are included as a non-statutory example of what might be taught but there is no reference to the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) or to Nelson and Wellington, even in the non-statutory examples. It will be argued that teachers cannot teach, say, the period 1745-1901 without teaching the Napoleonic Wars but at best, for many pupils, if it taught at all, this may translate into an empathy exercise about conditions on board HMS Victory rather than a narrative of the events and consequences.

Writing landmark events and personalities out of British history, unless they are 'nailed down', is quite a simple process, as a previous

Government demonstrated with regard to Winston Churchill. On the 50th anniversary of V-E Day, the Department for Education sent a teaching video about World War 2 to every school in the country. The primary school version lasted 34 minutes but allocated only 14 seconds of indistinct coverage near the end to Churchill stating only that, "People thought he helped the war end in Britain." The video did emphasise, though, "It was quite sexist in the war." Churchill is similarly marginalised in the secondary school version of the video. He is mentioned by name just once but only in the context of losing the 1945 General Election. In contrast, Hitler is mentioned 16 times.

Given that nearly all the content of the new curriculum comes under the heading of "Examples (non-statutory)" it is significant that the teaching of a few topic areas is not left to chance. These are examples of prescribed subject content:

- ◆ "the achievements of the earliest civilizations—an overview of where and when the first civilizations appeared and a depth study of one of the following: Ancient Sumer, The Indus Valley, Ancient Egypt, The Shang Dynasty of Ancient China"
- ◆ "non European society that provides contrasts with British history — one study chosen from: early Islamic civilization, including a study of Baghdad c. AD 900; Mayan civilization c. AD 900; Benin (West Africa) c. AD 900-1300"
- ◆ "at least one study of a significant society or issue in world history and its interconnections with other world developments [for example, Mughal India 1526-1857; China's Qing dynasty 1644-1911; Changing Russian empires c.1800-1989; USA in the 20th century]"

One might legitimately ask why Baghdad or Benin have been placed on a statutory list whilst World War 1 is specified as "non statutory" and the Napoleonic Wars do not get any mention at all.

The new National Curriculum for History defines the subject largely in terms of cross curricula concepts (e.g. "continuity and change, cause and

consequence, similarity, difference and significance") and 'skills' that promote all knowledge as being 'provisional'. This can lead to a distortion in the teaching of the subject and to the downgrading of knowledge because teachers are likely to choose content to illustrate the concepts and skills rather than for its historical importance, e.g. the disappearance of the princes in the Tower under King Richard III lends itself well to an exercise in the 'skill' of evidence evaluation but the lesson time taken up will displace lesson time for teaching the causes, events and consequences of the Wars of the Roses. When children have to 'create' the past for themselves, only small amounts of the historical narrative can be covered.

The 'skills' approach becomes more dangerous and subversive when the topic being taught is something both contentious and contemporary such as British Sovereignty and the European Union. The curriculum makes no specific mention of the EU. The closest that one gets to the subject is "Britain's place in the world since 1945" under "Examples (non-statutory)" that teaching about "challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day", "could include". The Curriculum document makes clear how such a topic should be taught. It defines the "Purpose of Study" as equipping pupils "to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement." All of this is commendable, of course, but applied to the classroom it means a teaching approach that sidelines knowledge in the interests of teaching skills. At best, 'evidence' will be presented as a vehicle for teaching a 'skill' rather than expanding pupil knowledge and, at worst, it will have been carefully chosen in order to lead pupils towards a particular viewpoint. Pupils' knowledge of the EU will be dependent on the 'evidence' that a teacher chooses to present. This may be genuine evidence or it may be fake evidence but it will certainly be evidence that has been 'selected'.

What this means in the classroom becomes clear if one opens the pages of a school history textbook co authored by one of the cabal from the educational establishment who wrote the final version History National Curriculum. A hugely popular Longman textbook, part of a series covering British history, in its 11th reprint, entitled, *Minds and Machines, Britain 1750 to 1900* (ISBN 978 0 582 29500-1) is illustrative.

From the start it sets out to dilute, diminish and change British national identity. Traditional heroes including Clive of India, General Wolfe, Admiral Nelson, Florence Nightingale and General Gordon are all excluded. The Duke of Wellington's role in history is confined to his opposition to the Chartists. There is no mention of his role at Waterloo. The book promotes Peterloo, not Waterloo. Nor do many prime ministers get much of a look in. Pitt the Elder, Pitt the Younger and Peel are all sidelined. Palmerston and Gladstone get minor walk-on roles. Instead, new 'heroes' appear, including the American Chief Crowfoot, the African Chief Lobengula, the Fijian Chief Cakobau, the Indian Princess Rani Lakshmi, an Aborigine teacher named Bessy Cameron and Josephine Butler, a British campaigner against sexually transmitted diseases.

Landmark events and topics such as the Seven Years' War, the American Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War and the Irish Question are among major topics, which are either dismissed in a few sentences or totally ignored. Instead, children are provided with a feminist study of Victorian prostitution, sex, and sexually transmitted diseases. Pupils are informed that "...the law treated women's bodies as pieces of meat". And, in order to provide appropriate evidence for empathising with "the rulers and the ruled" of the British Empire the authors of the book write, "...we have tried to imagine what they would tell us if they were to come back from the dead." This fits very well with the current popularity amongst teenagers of films, TV programmes, book and comics that centre on zombies, vampires and other variations of the 'undead'.

We, thus, learn that an 'undead' Princess Rani Lakshmi would feel the need to tell pupils that, "The British punished survivors by firing canon balls through them at point blank range." A resurrected Chief Lobengula would apparently say, "My men bravely stood up to the British who cut them down with their canons and machine guns. Soon afterwards I died. My people were conquered and our lands taken." Cecil Rhodes' message to us from beyond the grave rather confirms what a bad lot we Brits are. He is made to say, "I made a fortune... But that was not enough for me: I wanted to change history. We British were the best people in the world so I wanted to control as much of the world as possible."

The book is more concerned with leading immature youngsters towards superficial moral judgements than it is in providing them with knowledge. Many of the chapter headings are dominated by gloom, doom and despair, suffering and desperation, injustice and exploitation: 'White Gold & Black Misery', 'Fingers weary and worn', 'A perfect wilderness of foulness', 'Pauper places', 'Riot and Reform', 'A policy of sewage'.

It is in these terms that the authors interpreted the previous National Curriculum and the new 2015 History National Curriculum requires and embeds such an approach. It accommodates just about anything in terms of content but there is no such latitude with the prescribed 'skills-based' teaching method. This is 'nailed down' and prescribed. More, it is very, very time-consuming and will eat into the limited time, often only an hour a week, allocated by schools to history.

As the textbook quoted from above demonstrates, alongside the promotion of 'skills' at the expense of knowledge, history lessons these days have an important role to play in promoting politically correct ideology. This development has gone largely, but not completely, unnoticed by parliament. Back in 2000, for example, Baroness Blatch, made a speech to the House of Lords in which she recalled a visit, as Schools Minister, to a school history lesson:

"...I visited a school, which will have to remain nameless, where I was told that they taught all subjects through prejudice, racism, gender and conflict. Apart from needing to be held down by my officials when I heard that, what went through my mind was the denial of the glories of literature and history denied to those pupils. This is not to say that prejudice, racism, gender and conflict are not important in themselves, but to teach all subjects through those themes seemed to be almost a criminal activity on the children. But there seems to be a return to that." (House of Lords, Hansard, 27.3.2000).

Since Baroness Blatch expressed her concerns the stranglehold of 'political correctness' in schools has grown rather than diminished. In November 2014 the Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, published guidance on promoting "British Values" in English schools. Previous

guidance from Michael Gove in 2011 had simply required schools to “respect these values”. The new requirement is for schools to “actively promote” them and to “have a clear strategy for embedding these values and show how their work with pupils has been effective in doing so.” This is turning into a predictable nightmare. As with so many well-intentioned initiatives, the educational establishment, ‘The Blob’, has seized control. For it, ‘British values’ does not mean providing pupils with knowledge of Magna Carta or of the fight for liberty or of the struggle for democracy. ‘British values’ is seen as another vehicle for promoting politically correct zealotry and ideology that, in its most recent manifestation at Grindon Hall Christian School in Sunderland, ten-year-olds were, it seems, interrogated about their knowledge of lesbian sex and trans-sexuality. Inspectors, also, allegedly asked primary aged girls if they knew what lesbians “did” and if they had any friends who felt that they were trapped in the “wrong body”. The school has made a formal complaint to Ofsted. The interpretation of “British values” is in danger of being corrupted in much the same manner as the History National Curriculum.

Perhaps most worrying of all is the encouragement the so-called “British values” agenda gives to teaching ‘value relativism’ in schools under the guise of what the DfE defines as the British value of “mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.” Translated into the classroom, and not exclusively for history lessons, this can readily mean that the views of the moderate and of the extremist are given equal weight—different views but equal views. Unwittingly, therefore, schools are radicalising some young people. That most are doing so for the very best of intentions makes such ‘value relativism’ doubly dangerous. It has become such an article of faith for many history teachers that ‘evidence’ is being invented or ‘doctored’ in order to be ‘fair’ to everyone. Informed and intelligent debate in schools, based on a depth of knowledge about controversial topics, including the EU, is becoming less and less possible.

Former Education Secretary, Michael Gove told the 2010 Conservative Party Conference that, “One of the under-appreciated tragedies of our time has been the sundering of our society from its past.

Children are growing up ignorant of one of the most inspiring stories I know—the history of our United Kingdom.” He promised to stop schools from “trashing our past”. He correctly identified the problem and it is a problem that has direct relevance to allowing an informed debate about Britain’s national sovereignty and the EU. ‘Ignorance’ will not permit such debate to be meaningful.

For all that the ‘spin doctors’ would have us believe otherwise, Michael Gove lost his battle over the history curriculum. It simply will not do for commentators sympathetic to Gove in the national press to proclaim that traditional history is back. Nothing is back, not even Churchill. In some respects matters are worse since even less content is prescribed now than under previous versions of the history curriculum, e.g. the World Wars, are now optional.

The one area of the new curriculum where progress does seem to have been towards restoring some integrity and sense is with regard to bringing back a chronological framework. Sadly, even in this area, much is amiss. Younger children, in particular, will suffer from confusion, since the crucial foundation-building Key Stage 1 curriculum (5-7 year-olds) for history will produce chronological chaos. It requires teachers to jump around in time, for example, between Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria, William Caxton and Tim Berners-Lee, Christopher Columbus and Neil Armstrong. This totally contradicts what is known about the cognitive development of this age group and it is this age group that is the most important of all.

Although it is set within an ostensibly chronological framework an element of chronological confusion will continue at the other two Key Stages at which history is a compulsory subject—Key Stage 2 (7 to 11 year-olds) and at Key Stage 3 (11 to 14 year-olds). Pupils have to jump between early history and more recent history and vice versa. At Key Stage 2, for example, they might be studying “Britain’s settlement by Anglo-Saxons and Scots” one week and “the first railways” the next. At Key Stage 3 that might move from “women’s suffrage” one week to “the Neolithic Revolution” the next.

CONCLUSION

Lack of knowledge, not least of historical knowledge, poses a potential threat to the democratic process. A referendum on Britain's membership of the EU, for example, needs to be made on the basis of informed opinion. For some decades the knowledge content of school history lessons has been in decline. In Spring 2014 Ofsted's Lead Inspector for history admitted a new low point. Government claims that the new National Curriculum for history has secured the restoration of knowledge are false. Far from rectifying the failings with regard to knowledge of previous versions of the National Curriculum, it has embedded them.



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For a United
Kingdom
free of the EU



"This booklet provides a clear warning that our children are being brainwashed and, unfortunately, our politicians are either ignorant of what is happening or, even worse, are party to it."

Lord Stoddart of Swindon

"To be ignorant of what happened before you were born is to remain a child forever." *Marcus Tullius Cicero*

Chris McGovern is a retired headteacher with 35 years teaching experience in both maintained and independent schools, at all ages from 5 to 18.

He advised the Policy Unit at 10 Downing Street under Margaret Thatcher and John Major.

Recently, he advised Michael Gove on the National Curriculum for History. He has also sat on a committee of the TUC. His views are widely sought by the media at home and abroad. Currently, he is Chairman of the Campaign for Real Education.

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